

HEALING OF ANIMALS AMONG THE MORMONS

In order to understand the Mormon attempts to heal animals, one must know that a basic tenet of the church is that it alone is the true Church of Christ, established again after ages of apostasy and blessed with all the powers of the primitive one. Hence its members took literally the admonition that:

Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up....

/ James 5: 14-15/

While Joseph Smith was not so positive in his promise of full restoration, he did assure his people that :

And whosoever among you are sick, and have not faith to be healed, but believe, shall be nourished with all tenderness, with herbs and mild food, and that not by the hand of an enemy. And the elders of the church, two or more, shall be called and shall pray for and lay their hands upon them in my name; and if they die that shall die unto me, and if they live, they shall live unto me.

/ Doctrine & Covenants 42: 45-44/

More definite than the above, and more often quoted were the promises that in the latter days, signs should follow living faith.

Among these signs were the following:

...In my name they shall cast out devils;
In my name they shall heal the sick;
In my name they shall open the eyes of the blind
and unstop the ears of the deaf;
And the tongue of the dumb shall speak;
And if any man administer poison unto them
it shall not hurt them;
And the poison of a serpent shall not have power
to harm them....

/ Doc. & Cov. 84: 67-72/

These teachings help us to read with greater understanding the diaries of early Mormondom. This is especially true of those kept during the exodus from Nauvoo and throughout the trip on westward to Utah. These people thought of themselves as the Modern Israel,

the chosen people of God, on their way to seek a Land of Promise, where they could set up His Kingdom. To them, the Second Advent was indeed imminent; they must work diligently to prepare a place for His coming.

The first group out of Nauvoo crossed the Mississippi during early February to face a delayed winter of snow and storm, of cold so intense that the stream was frozen over and teams arriving on February 15 crossed on the ice instead of the ferry. In all this, there was great suffering from exposure; there was great courage and fortitude displayed. But basic problems of shelter and food, of provender for the animals, of group morale were met largely because of these basic doctrines and the belief that they were in reality the children of God, and He was testing their mettle.

Among the diarists of this group, John D. Lee ranks high. His accounts of conditions are clear and detailed. Since this is still in typescript, citations must be by date rather than page.

March 4 '46 ...Many horses were sick--the medicine used was oats tobacco and salt mixed--one of the horses had the distemper and was removed from the camp....

Saturday Mar 14 1846 Richardson's Point

...Some time today Wm Hall left camp with his team for the Des Moines river to bring forward a load for A J Stout At Indian Creek one of his horses sickened with a bloating cholick Elder Hall & Luallen Mantle layed hands on him & he recovered immediately & went on about 2 miles when he was again attacked much more violently than before they tried to give him medicine but could not succeed the horse layed on his side with his foot over his ear Reuben Strong said he believed there was life in him yet, and proposed to lay hands on him but some doubted whether it was right to lay hands on a horse or not Elder Hall replied the prophet Joel has said that in the last days the Lord would pour out his spirit upon all flesh & this satisfied the Brethren & Elder Wm Hall R R Strong L Mantle Jos Chaplain Martin Potter & one more laid hands on the horse and commanded the unclean and foul spirit of what ever Name or Nature to depart and go to Warsaw and trouble the Saints no more when the horse rolled twice over in great distress squealed vomited & purged next morning was harnessed to a load of about 12 hundred & performed his part as usual